Remarks

Claims 1, 3, 5-29, and 32-41 are in the application. Claims 1, 14, 21, and 29 are in independent form. Claims 2, 4, 30, and 31 have been cancelled.

Fig. 3 stands objected to because the top margin is unacceptable. Applicants submit a corrected Fig. 3.

Claims 1-20 stand rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, for indefiniteness. The Examiner states that claims 1 and 14 include ambiguous references to the term "system." Claims 1 and 14 have been amended to correct the ambiguity. Applicant request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 1-41 stand rejected under 35 USC 102(e) for anticipation by US Patent No. 6,484,196 of Maurille. Applicant responds as follows.

Independent claim 1 has been amended to include the subject matter of claim 2, which has been cancelled. Applicant amended claim 1 is patentably distinct from the cited reference for the following reasons.

Maurille describes a communication board messaging system with several modes. One mode is referred to as a "private message board system," which is described with reference to Figs. 4B-4D and displays for each user only the messages that are sent to or from the user.

> When the preferred embodiment is configured as a private message board system, each user interacts with the communication system via a private bulletin board in which the client application instantly displays the history and content of all messages associated with conversations in which the respective user is a party. (Muarille, col. 3, lines 49-54.)

A "conference mode" is described with reference to Figs. 7B and 7C. Fig. 7B illustrates a communication board for rendering for a particular user (e.g., "Mit") notifications and announcements about a conference (Maurille, col. 18, lines 1-18). Announcements are messages that are broadcast to all users who are online. (Maurille, col. 18, lines25-27, emphasis added.) Fig. 7C illustrates a conference session screen 770 having an agenda 772 that is defined by a moderator and a comment screen 774 on which comments typed by participants

are displayed. (Maurille, col. 18, lines 39-45.) Figs. 8A and 8B illustrate a "Talk mode" that allows users to participate in informal, unlogged conversations. Fig. 9 illustrates a mail mode that allows a user to send threaded e-mail over the Internet.

Amended claim 1 recites a real-time computer discussion system, sometimes referred to as a chat system, in which a common sequence and set of messages are transmitted among multiple user computers as substantially real-time messages of a discussion between users of the user computers. The discussion system includes:

computer software instructions for providing plural sessions of communication between any of the user computers and a central computer system, users of the user computers participating in the discussion during the sessions;

computer software instructions for rendering on the user computers a summary of participation in the discussion by the users during the plural sessions; and

computer software instructions for rendering on the user computers the common sequence and set of messages simultaneously with the summary of participation in the discussion by the users.

The discussion system of claim 1 relates to a chat or discussion system in which a common sequence and set of messages are transmitted among multiple user computers as substantially real-time messages of a discussion. As amended to include the subject matter of claim 2, which has been cancelled, claim 1 clarifies that the common sequence and set of messages are rendered on the user computers. This means that the user computers render the same sequence and set of messages. In contrast, the "private message board system" in Figs. 4B-4D of Maurille show a different set of messages for each user, namely , only those messages that are sent to or from the user.

Claim 1 also recites that "a summary of participation in the discussion by

the users during the plural sessions" is rendered on the user computers simultaneously with the common sequence and set of messages. With reference to Fig. 3 of the application, for example, one implementation of the discussion system of claim 1 persistently maintains summary information regarding user participation in a multi-session discussion and displays the information at user computers as social accounting pane 74 while messages are displayed in a threaded discussion message pane 72.

Applicant submits that claim 1 is patentably distinct from the cited reference for the following reasons. Maurille does not teach or suggest in any of its modes the discussion system recited in claim 1. The "private message board system" shown in Figs. 4B-4D of Maurille does not include a common sequence and set of messages are transmitted to and rendered on multiple user computers," as recited in the claim. Instead, the "private message board system" shown in Figs. 4B-4D of Maurille provides a separate, private message listing for each user.

Moreover, none of the modes described in Maurille provides "a summary of participation in the discussion by the users during the plural sessions" simultaneously with the common sequence and set of messages. The private message board mode of Maurille does not render a common set and sequence of messages, and the conference mode does not provide multiple sessions of discussion or a summary of participation in the discussion by the users during the plural sessions. The other modes of Maurille are even more distinct from the subject matter of claim 1. Applicant submits, therefore, that claim 1 is patentably distinct from the cited reference and requests that the rejection be withdrawn.

Applicant believes claims 3-13 are allowable as dependents of claim 1 and that ones of the claims are further allowable for the following reasons.

With regard to dependent claims 2-6, the Examiner cites passages of Maurille referencing the "private message board' of Fig. 4B. Claims 2 and 4 have been cancelled, and claim 3 has been amended to depend from claim 1.

With regard to claim 3, applicant notes that "private message board" of

Fig. 4B does not provide common sequence and set of messages to multiple users. Rather, a different "private message board" is provided for each user, as illustrated by Mit's message board in Fig. 4B and Arlene's message board in Fig. 4C. Moreover, both Figs. 4B and 4C show only one window or pane, not the separate panes recited in the claim. Applicant requests, therefore, that the rejection of claim 3 be withdrawn.

With regard to claim 5, applicant notes that none of the modes of Maurille provide the common sequence and set of messages to the plural user computers. In addition, Table 1 (column 1) and stated at col. 2, lines 35-40, conventional chat systems "do not provide conversation history." Applicant submits that such a lack of history in a chat or discussion system shows the novelty of "persistently maintaining and providing to the user computers the messages of the discussion," as recited in claim 5. Applicant requests, therefore, that the rejection of claim 5 be withdrawn.

With regard to claims 7-9, the Examiner cites passages of Maurille referencing the conference mode illustrated in Fig. 7C. Applicant notes that the conference mode of Maurille does not teach or suggest the subject matter of base claim 1. With regard to claim 7, there is no teaching or suggestion in Maurille that the list of participants 776 in Fig. 7C is anything other than current participants in the conference. Applicant submits that there is no teaching or suggestion that the list of participants 776 in Fig. 7C lists "users who have participated in the discussion during any of the plural sessions," as recited in claim 7. Applicant requests, therefore, that the rejection of claim 7 be withdrawn.

Claim 8 has been amended to depend from claim 7. With reference to Fig. 3 of the application, for example, information about all participants who have participated in any of plural sessions of a discussion is included, as well as information about who is currently participating. Applicant submits that the cited reference at most show who is currently participating in a conference, and does not teach or suggest separately indicating separately who is a current participant and who has participated in any of plural sessions. Applicant request, therefore,

that the rejection of claim 8 be withdrawn.

Claim 9 has been amended to clarify that identifying when users most recently participated in the discussion during any of the plural sessions includes identifying users who are not currently participating in the discussion. Applicant submits that the cited reference at most show who is currently participating in a conference, and does not teach or suggest separately indicating when anyone who is not a current participant last participated in the discussion. Applicant request, therefore, that the rejection of claim 9 be withdrawn.

With regard to claim 10, the Examiner cites an "Exit Session" control, which in the context of the "Print minutes" control, the "Store session" control, etc., would suggest nothing more than a control by which a user may exit a conference session. Nothing in the cited reference teaches or suggests identifying when users who are not currently participating in the discussion most recently stopped participating. Applicant request, therefore, that the rejection of claim 10 be withdrawn.

With regard to claim 11, the Examiner cites a passage stating:

> This screen 770 is displayed for all users who are participants in the conference by their respective browsers 168. In a preferred embodiment all conference information is logged by the application server 114 on the hard disk 104. The screen 770 includes an ANON button, which, when selected, allows a user to participate in the conference anonymously. (Maurille, col. 18, lines 44-49)

Applicant submits that neither the cited passage nor any other part of Maurille teaches or suggests "session participation information indicating a number of sessions during which each user participated in the discussion," as recited in the claim. While claim 11 is directed specifically to tracking user participation over multiple sessions, there is no hint that Maurille tracks, much less renders on a user display, any such information. Applicant request, therefore, that the rejection of claim 11 be withdrawn.

With regard to claims 12 and 13, the Examiner cites a table in Maurille showing information stored about messages. Applicant notes, however, that

there is no teaching or suggestion of rendering a "summary of participation in the discussion including message type information indicating numbers of at least the first and second selected message types provided to the discussion by each user." There is no teaching or suggestion that the system of Maurille even provides a summary of participation, as recited in the base claim, or an indication of the numbers of different types of information. Applicant request, therefore, that the rejection of claims 12 and 13 be withdrawn.

Claim 14 recites a data structure in a real-time computer discussion system, sometimes referred to as a chat system, in which a common sequence and set of messages are transmitted among multiple user computers as substantially real-time messages of a discussion between users of the user computers. The data structure includes a user identifying information field for identifying users who have participated in the discussion during any of the plural sessions. Claim 21 recites a corresponding graphical user interface. Applicant submits that claims 14 and 21 are patentably distinct from the cited reference for the following reasons.

Claims 14 and 21 relate to a chat or discussion system in which a common sequence and set of messages are transmitted among multiple user computers as substantially real-time messages of a discussion. This means that the user computers render the same sequence and set of messages. In contrast, the "private message board system" in Figs. 4B-4D of Maurille show a different set of messages for each user, namely, only those messages that are sent to or from the user. There is no teaching or suggestion that the conference mode in Figs. 7B and 7C relates to a discussion that extends over multiple sessions.

Moreover, there is no teaching or suggestion in Maurille that the list of participants 776 in Fig. 7C is anything other than current participants in the conference. Applicant submits that there is no teaching or suggestion in Maurille of a data structure or a user interface for a discussion (i.e., chat) system with a field for "identifying users who have participated in the discussion during any of

the plural sessions." Applicant requests, therefore, that the rejections of claims 14 and 21 be withdrawn.

Applicant believes claims 15-20 and 22-28 are allowable as dependents of respective claims 14 and 21, and that the claims are further allowable for the reasons set forth above with regard to corresponding ones of claims 3-13.

Claim 29 has been amended to include the subject matter of claims 30 and 31, which have been cancelled. Amended claim 29 recites a method in a real-time discussion system in which a common sequence and set of messages are transmitted among multiple user computers as substantially real-time messages of a discussion. Accordingly, the user computers render the same sequence and set of messages. In contrast, the "private message board system" in Figs. 4B-4D of Maurille show a different set of messages for each user, namely , only those messages that are sent to or from the user.

Claim 29 also recites that "a summary of participation in the discussion by the users during the plural sessions" is rendered on the user computers simultaneously with the common sequence and set of messages in separate and distinct panes. With reference to Fig. 3 of the application, for example, one implementation of the method of claim 29 persistently maintains summary information regarding user participation in a multi-session discussion and displays the information at user computers as social accounting pane 74 while messages are displayed in a threaded discussion message pane 72.

Applicant submits that claim 29 is patentably distinct from the cited reference for the following reasons. Maurille does not teach or suggest in any of its modes the discussion system recited in claim 29. The "private message board system" shown in Figs. 4B-4D of Maurille does not include a common sequence and set of messages are transmitted to and rendered on multiple user computers," as recited in the claim. Instead, the "private message board system" shown in Figs. 4B-4D of Maurille provides a separate, private message listing for each user.

Moreover, none of the modes described in Maurille provides "a summary

of participation in the discussion by the users during the plural sessions"
simultaneously with and in a distinct pane from the common sequence and set of
messages. The private message board mode of Maurille does not render a
common set and sequence of messages, and the conference mode does not
provide multiple sessions of discussion or a summary of participation in the
discussion by the users during the plural sessions. The other modes of Maurille
are even more distinct from the subject matter of claim 29. Applicant submits,
therefore, that claim 29 is patentably distinct from the cited reference and
requests that the rejection be withdrawn.

Applicant believes claims 32-41are allowable as dependents of claim 29,
and that the claims are further allowable for the reasons set forth above with
regard to corresponding ones of claims 3-13.

Applicant believes the application is in condition for allowance and
respectfully requests the same.

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